Alumna	Charlotte de Brabandt
Subject	Management with Marketing
Graduated	2008
Place of Work	VW Group
Position	Group Procurement

The Volkswagen Group is the world's third largest motor vehicle manufacturer. The Group's major subsidiaries include VW, Porsche, Audi, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini, SEAT, VW Commercial Vehicles, Scania, Škoda and MAN.
Charlotte joined VW Group's International Management graduate programme, which involved her living in Beijing for one year. She is responsible for the Group's procurement in innovative technologies within the electrical world of *'Automotive Infotainment'*.

Great minds *go on to* great places

Why did you choose to study Management with Marketing?
I visited lots of international and UK universities offering my course, before I arrived at Royal Holloway. I was convinced immediately, and knew that this was the university with the right course for me. After exploring the campus and visiting the School of Management, my feelings were confirmed. I knew I could use my time here wisely, and moreover explore my interests in the economical and management world.

What attracted you to the School of Management?
The structure of the School made me feel very much welcome, and I thoroughly enjoyed my studies. I was an ambassador for the School, and Vice President of the Management Society. My involvement in these areas meant I was able to work closely with the professors.

What was the best part of the course?
It was all tremendously exciting, but in particular, Strategy Management, from learning about Henry Ford's maxim 'any customer can have a car painted in any color that he wants as long as it is black', right up to Porter's five forces, and applying strategy to real scenarios. I still apply what I learnt about strategy analysis when evaluating ideas at work.

What was the most exciting experience you had at university?
I had so many great and long lasting experiences at Royal Holloway, with friends, fellow students and through the great societies that were offered. I also discovered by passion for entrepreneurship, taking part in a few innovative competitions, from ideas based to business plan presentations. In my first year, I was awarded 3rd prize and £2,000 in the Making a Difference competition run by the South East England Development Agency [SEEDA]. I competed against students from all 29 universities in the SEEDA region, and had a mentor, David Saunders, to guide me through the process. I pitched the concept and design for a telephone for elderly people, aimed at improving interaction via larger buttons and amplified sound. It was a fantastic experience.

What societies and extra-curricular did you participate in?
I was Vice President of the College's Debating, Management and Investment Societies. Debating involved giving weekly sessions to 20 members of the society, as well as participating in national and international competitions. Whilst VP of the Investment Society with over 450 members, I gave weekly courses in investment and brought alumni speakers in to complement the theoretical content of the course. In 2006, we received the ProShare 'Young Investor' award. Whilst VP of the Management Society, my aim was to enhance the 50 members' 'enjoyability' or soft skills, giving them an insight into the real world of work through company visits and talks from managers within different industries, as well as holding networking and guest speaker events. In 2005, I attended the World Business Forum in Frankfurt and in 2006 I took part in the 1st Gender International Marketing Congress.

I was an Ambassador for the School, organising another charity event in Germany and inviting managers from South America and China to attend. This fundraising initiative proved very successful, and I was able to promote awareness of charitable giving across the university. I have always been involved in entrepreneurial business competitions; these projects taught me to think like a leader, to effectively communicate creative ideas to a team, and helped me to develop my teamwork and motivational skills.

What were the best parts of your internships?
I completed three internships with HSBC in the Treasury Management group, Private Banking and Trinkhaus & Burkhardt [Private Banking, Family Office]. The roles involved research and analysis, for instance, whilst working in the Treasury Management group I was working with the in-

people *with* passion

> “Consider your chances, take up the challenges, fulfill your goals.”

house economic analysts to observe, analyse and evaluate trends on international interest rates, fixed income and foreign exchange markets. Based on this research, I put forward concrete strategies for the clients, to assist them in hedging their commercial business transactions.

What is your background?

I have always taken the opportunity to travel abroad during my holidays, travelling independently to more than 30 countries across five continents. I have been exposed to different ways of living, and have perceived the sometimes great inequalities between countries and cities. These experiences have made me understand where I am heading in life.

What do you do at VW Group?

I officially began my career at the VW Group in 2009, after completing three years at Royal Holloway and a one year Masters programme. I do group purchasing for all the subsidiaries, a role that requires great responsibility, since I am managing all the volumes and capacities needed worldwide. Group procurement is the acquisition of goods relating to the automotive industry. I follow a process intended to promote fair and open competition for the business, whilst minimizing the exposure to fraud and collusion. Obtaining the best possible cost is imperative to meeting the needs of the purchaser in terms of quality and quantity, time and location. Procurement generally involves making buying decisions under conditions of scarcity. If good data is available, it is good practice to make use of economic analysis methods such as cost-benefit analysis or cost-utility analysis, or analysis of risk, to determine the value of the purchase.

My daily role involves following the process of the procurement life cycle, from information gathering to determine the client's needs, supplier contact, background review of the products or services, negotiation, fulfillment to the consumption, maintenance and renewal of the products themselves.

What is the best thing that has happened to you this year?

After graduating, I continued to take part in idea competitions, this year undertaking the Marga Management Business Simulation. In the competition, participants manage all the departments and functions of a simulated company in the scope of a management training programme. In this context, they get to know the current management instruments and consolidate their basic business contexts. The participants use the knowledge they have gained in the team to make and implement specific decisions in the business case, learning to strategically plan over a long term. This in turn means that unique transfer of knowledge occurs in the direction of business thinking and management. Overall, I reached the finals of the competition and was placed third out of 3,000 competitors. It is the biggest management competition in Germany and got great coverage in the newspapers.

What was the most difficult part of the transition from studying to working?

Convincing the organisation to take me in spite of my young age. I was in direct competition with graduates who already had many years of work experience in comparison to me. Also, you have to quickly develop resilience to the pressures of working.

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